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STRENGTHENING COOPERATION WITHIN THE ECE REGION: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND COOPERATION WITH SUBREGIONAL GROUPINGS, INTERESTS AND INITIATIVES

The objective of ECE operational activities is to help countries to benefit more fully from the regular activities of ECE: norms and standard-setting, policy debate, and the collection and provision of information and data.

The following issues deserve particular consideration:

- **operational activities organized with sub-regional groupings and initiatives have a larger impact as they benefit all countries which are members of these entities. The Commission may therefore wish to consider whether priority should be given to demands emanating from sub-regional groupings or initiatives.**

- **the pace and effects of economic reforms are uneven. Therefore the Commission may wish to consider whether operational activities should be primarily directed towards the neediest countries in transition, taking into account the thrust and focus of the assistance provided by other organisations and institutions, in particular the European Union.**

- **participation in regular ECE meetings is the best way for countries to become familiar with the instruments developed by the Commission and to ensure that their concerns are addressed. As associated travel costs are considerable, the Commission may wish to invite PSSs to programme, as much as possible, workshops and seminars on the eve of their regular meetings, thus minimizing travel expenditures.**

INTRODUCTION

1. The countries in transition of central and eastern Europe have made significant but unequal progress in adapting their economies to market conditions by introducing market economy legislation, standards, pricing policies and privatization. Now they are entering the next stage of development on the road to their integration into the global market economy and the European economy which requires consolidation and strengthening of institutions, policies and practices aimed at obtaining the full benefit from market economy mechanisms. At this stage their needs for technical assistance, which are increasing in demand, are more specialized.

2. Thanks to the team of regional advisers, ECE technical assistance is delivered at short notice and without an excess of bureaucracy. Following the adoption of the ECE reform in April 1997, a Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities was established to deal with issues and activities which, within the ECE mandate, respond to the needs of specific groups of countries: countries in transition, sets of countries belonging to the same sub-region or groups of countries spread throughout the region but having a common interest in a specific issue where ECE has a recognised expertise. The Unit's role is to support and, when necessary, coordinate operational activities undertaken by ECE's Divisions, including by the Regional Advisers.

3. The forms and methods of operational activities vary according to the needs of the recipient country(ies) and sub-regions. They may involve:

- consultative and advisory missions, undertaken by both Regional Advisers and regular staff;
- preparation and implementation of specific programmes, both issue- and sub-region-oriented;
- preparation of project proposals;
- organization of workshops, seminars, study tours, training programmes, conferences and other expert group meetings.
- preparation of case studies, surveys and substantive documents;
- collection and dissemination of statistical data and information, using in particular the World Wide Web.

These activities are carried out in many cases in close cooperation with other international, national and regional organizations such as UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, ESCAP, the World Bank, EBRD, OECD, EU, Council of Europe, Eurostat, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), USAID, etc.

4. Tables 1 and 2 describe respectively the activities of regional advisers and provide a list of workshops, seminars, study tours and training courses which have

taken place since April 1997. These include activities organized directly by ECE or those to which ECE has contributed or given support. Annex I of the report provides more descriptive and detailed information on the orientations of the assistance provided, by sector.

I. COOPERATION WITH SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INITIATIVES

5. In the course of 1997, operational activities undertaken in cooperation with, or in the framework of, sub-regional organizations or initiatives have significantly increased. Agreements with the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as well as support to the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and the soon-to-be launched Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) should reinforce this trend. Cooperation with sub-regional groupings and initiatives has some merits: it promotes greater awareness and use of instruments developed at intergovernmental level within ECE by benefiting from the political visibility of these groupings and it increases the country coverage of ECE assistance. In addition, it avoids the development by these groupings of competing policies or instruments which would create confusion at governmental level. The inconvenience is that this approach is less flexible and demands more preparation and coordination than country assistance.

6. Cooperation with BSEC, the CEI and the CIS includes the exchange of information, provision of expertise within available resources, and joint organisation and support of activities which are mutually agreed upon in advance. Table 3 of the report provides some specific details on ECE's cooperation with these initiative/sub-regional groupings. The cooperation between ECE and these entities has been or will be formalized in different manners.

7. A Memorandum of Understanding between ECE and the Central European Initiative (CEI) is expected to be signed in the near future. ECE is already supporting CEI activities on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and has prepared project proposals in the field of sustainable energy development. In November 1997 it was also decided to cooperate on concrete projects in the environment sector.

8. Cooperation with the Interstate Economic Committee of the Economic Union of the CIS, which aims at stimulating economic reforms and at harmonizing norms and standards, has been formalized in a Memorandum on Interaction and a Protocol for the exchange of information signed in April 1997. This was followed by the elaboration of a detailed programme of cooperation relating to a number of sectors (see Table 3) and the secretariat has established direct contacts with relevant CIS institutions. Cooperation with the CIS Interstate Statistical Committee has been particularly fruitful. ECE also cooperated with the CIS Interstate Ecological Council and Interstate Economic Committee in the organization of the International

Conference on Sustainable Development of Countries in Transition held in Minsk in April 1997.

9. ECE and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) secretariats have had several exchanges of views and letters on possible cooperation. This cooperation is already at work in energy and SME development, as shown in Table 3. In December it was agreed between the SECI Coordinator, the Executive Secretary of ECE and the Secretary-General of BSEC to extend, when feasible and useful, SECI projects to non-SECI participating BSEC countries. This will particularly be the case for border crossing and electricity grids.

10. The Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) was set up in December 1996 with the aim of encouraging cooperation among the countries of the region and facilitating the access of southeast Europe to European integration. The ECE was requested to provide SECI with technical assistance in helping it to discharge its tasks.

11. The ECE secretariat prepared a number of project proposals for the first meeting of the SECI Agenda Committee (January 1997), out of which six projects were selected (see Table 3) and lead countries for their implementation were identified. At the last Agenda Committee meeting in January 1998 one additional project was decided on - Interconnection of Electricity Grids. In addition, a project proposal on Cooperation among Stock Exchanges of the Region has been prepared and circulated to members of the Agenda Committee.

12. The SECI *ad hoc* project groups work along two complementary lines. The first one consists of simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures as well as exchange of experiences or *ad hoc* studies. The second one consists of elaboration of bankable projects necessary for improving infrastructure or training and the identification of appropriate funding. ECE contributes fully to the first line by sharing its instruments (conventions, laws, standards and guidelines) which facilitate good neighbourly relations and integration into the ECE region. ECE can also contribute to feasibility studies and preparation of bankable projects. However, it is the task of the Coordinator and of the Supporting States to find public or private financing for projects. In this connection, the results of the meetings of the Project Groups have been considered by meetings of the SECI Business Advisory Council (BAC) as part of the efforts being made to secure financial support for the projects and the involvement of the business community in their implementation.

13. The European Commission, the EBRD and the World Bank participate in many of the meetings of the ad *hoc* Project Groups and of the Agenda Committee; this ensures consistency between the different support provided to the SECI countries and avoids duplication.

14. The Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was initiated by the President of Kazakhstan and supported by the UN Secretary-General who asked the Executive Secretaries of ECE and ESCAP to combine their efforts in developing and implementing a regional programme. In its approach it is inspired by SECI despite the fact that, at this stage, the very useful role of Coordinator may have to be played by the secretariat. Its aim is to develop cooperation among the five central Asian countries and to facilitate their integration into both Asia and Europe. Project areas should be agreed upon soon (see Table 3)and lead countries identified. It is expected that the selected areas will be mainly those in which there are few possibilities to make significant progress without regional cooperation, such as water management, hydropower energy, trade facilitation and transport as well as areas where exchanges of experience and harmonization of policies are mutually beneficial.

15. A special feature of SPECA is that it is jointly promoted by ECE and ESCAP with the assistance of the UN Resident Coordinators. The strong support given by the Secretary-General is expected to secure the contribution of other concerned UN entities to SPECA.

II. COOPERATION WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN

16. The Mediterranean area includes not only countries belonging to ECE but also those belonging to ESCWA and ECA. As the sub-region is heterogenous in nature, comprising developing countries, transition economies and advanced market economies, it is sometimes difficult to speak of Mediterranean interests *per se*. Furthermore, the interests of some Mediterranean countries are linked to those of other sub-groups of countries. Thus, for example, the concerns of some Mediterranean countries are being addressed in the framework of SECI. In addition, the Trans European North-South Motorway (TEM) and the Trans European Railway (TER) projects both have a southern European/Mediterranean dimension.

17. Despite the diversity of needs and interests, there are cross-cutting themes of general concern to most, if not all, countries in the Mediterranean area. These include issues relating to air and water pollution, water management, energy supply and consumption, transport and trade relations, all of which feature in the ECE Programme of Work as matters of priority to all ECE member countries.

18. In view of previously expressed concerns by ECE Mediterranean member countries, the Commission may wish to consider requesting the secretariat to intensify the attention paid to the specific circumstances of its Mediterranean countries in implementing its Programme of Work. In this connection, it is worth noting that the Inland Transport Committee supports the activities of three Mediterranean transport centres placed under its auspices: the Western Mediterranean Transport Study Centre at Barcelona, Spain, the Eastern Mediterranean

Transport Study Centre at Volos, Greece and the Transport Training Centre at Istanbul, Turkey.

19. With regard to operational activities, the specific mechanism foreseen in the Plan of Action for responding to the needs of specific groups of countries is the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities (see para. 2 above) whose role will be to meet the specific requests of such countries, primarily through the organisation of workshops and seminars.

20. ECE had hoped to sponsor the following workshops/seminars in 1997 but was unable to do so, primarily because the expected funding from external sources has not yet been secured:

- Workshop on "Conformity assessment and quality development" (to be held in Cyprus)
- Seminar on "quality assurance and metrology" (to be held in Cyprus)
- Workshop on "Long-range transboundary air pollution" (to be held in Malta)

The secretariat has developed a list of additional possible workshops of interest to Mediterranean countries which could be organized by ECE, should funding be obtained. In this connection, it is proposed that the Executive Secretary convene a meeting of interested Ambassadors to discuss these proposals and possibilities for their funding.

21. In the meantime, a number of events have already been planned for 1998:

- A seminar on "Forestry training for groups that are hard to reach", a subject of interest to some Mediterranean countries, will be held in France in April 1998.
- The Mediterranean Gas Conference will be held jointly by ECE, the BOTAS Company (Turkey) and the ENI Company (Italy) in Istanbul in April 1998.
- ECE will contribute to a workshop on "Financing of Transport Infrastructure in the Mediterranean Region", to be organized by the Western Mediterranean Transport Study Centre (located in Barcelona), in the course of 1998.

22. ECE is also contributing to Eurostat's MEDSTAT Programme which aims at improving the statistical capacity of non-EU countries in the Mediterranean. Twelve countries are participating in the Programme including four ECE Members: Cyprus, Israel, Malta and Turkey. In particular, ECE is assisting in the project concerning international migration statistics, one of ten fields of statistics selected as priority work areas in the MEDSTAT programme.

23. In response to a specific request addressed to it at the 1997 ECOSOC meeting, the secretariat has initiated discussions with ESCWA and ECA in order to explore joint activities relating to the Mediterranean. Such cooperation is particularly important in order to promote harmonisation of norms and standards within the entire sub-region, thereby contributing to freer trade among countries of the sub-region and with other regions, and to better economic integration. In this connection, in November 1997, ECE participated in an ESCWA expert meeting and made presentations relating to Transport and Trade Facilitation. ECE has also helped to train ESCWA staff in trade facilitation procedures and envisages a number of joint activities with ESCWA in 1998. Given that ESCWA's membership comprises Mediterranean countries, all of the above is of benefit to these countries.

III. PROBLEMS AND FUTURE WORK ORIENTATIONS

24. The problem of resources has continued to hamper ECE operational activities for both recipient countries and the secretariat. On one hand, the serious financial constraints faced by the economies in transition limit their ability: to host meetings and workshops (since the ECE regular budget does not provide resources for this purpose), to implement operational projects, and to participate in ECE meetings. Consequently, these countries are not benefiting fully from their membership in ECE.

25. On the other hand, the human and financial resources allocated within ECE to undertake its operational activities are also limited and are not likely to be increased in the near future. Furthermore, the level of extra budgetary funds provided by member States for operational activities has remained at a low level. Although every effort to raise the efficiency of the utilization of existing resources is being made, there is a need for the additional financing of these activities by national and international financial institutions.

26. In view of the above, it is proposed:

- that the Commission decide that priority be given to demands emanating from sub-regional groupings or initiatives, in view of the "multiplier effect" of assistance provided in this manner;
- that the Commission focus on countries or groups of countries which are not given priority in assistance provided by OECD and the European Commission. In this connection it is worth noting that OECD has now reduced and refocused its technical assistance activities on a few non-OECD countries while the European Commission is concentrating its efforts on countries in the "pre-accession" phase.
- that the Commission give serious consideration to ways of facilitating the participation of representatives of the more disadvantaged transition countries in ECE meetings. This is considered very important since participation in regular meetings is the best way for countries to become

familiar with the instruments developed by the Commission and also to ensure that their specific concerns are taken into consideration. It is also the best way to establish a network of partners who could provide *ad hoc* advice or even channel bilateral assistance. Consequently, active participation in meetings, and, in particular, technical meetings, is an efficient way to strengthen the capacity of a country to implement ECE instruments.

27. How can such participation be facilitated? Some means are well known. One is direct financing of participants either by a donor country or by the European Commission, and here it is worth praising the efforts made by Eurostat to finance the participation of experts from those countries in many meetings of statisticians. The second is for each PSB to programme a workshop on the eve of its meeting and to invite participants from the concerned countries so as to minimize travel expenditure. This is only possible if the relevant trust funds are replenished.

28. In parallel with the above efforts, it is also necessary to invest in information technologies since advances in this field are creating new opportunities for the efficient and rapid exchange of information and ideas. Use of this technology compensates, in part, for a country's absence in a given meeting. In addition, it enables the secretariat to respond to requests from its member countries for assistance in setting up "home pages" on the Internet. The use of this technology in ECE's work, including its operational activities therefore deserves serious consideration and further development.

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Energy	Belarus	- To report on development of BYE/004/93 project to workshop on energy savings and energy supply to cities, 28-31 Oct. 97
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	- To conduct meeting SECI gas project, 16-20 Feb. 98
	Georgia	- Participation in consultative meeting on implementation of Energy Efficiency Projects in Georgia, 12-17 Oct. 97
	Hungary	- 2nd session of SECI Project Group on Energy Efficiency Demonstration Zones; Project development and Finance Workshop for Economies in Transition, 22-25 Sept. 97
	Russian Federation	- Development of regional cooperation in the field of energy BASHKIR Rep, 16-19 Sept. 97 - Consultations with CIS Interstat Economic Commission on Joint Project in Energy field and meeting of Energy Efficiency demonstration zones managers, 18-27 Oct. 97 - Meeting of Energy Efficiency Demonstration Zones managers of the Russian Fed.; Preparation of CIS energy efficiency policy project, 3-12 Dec. 97 - Discussion of Energy Efficiency 2000 Project with representative of Ministry of Science and Technology; To deliver lecture at training course, 11-16 Feb. 98
	Ukraine	- Discussions with management of Energy Demonstration Zones; To assist local team with elaboration of programme on energy saving in settlements of Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, 28 July - 1 Aug. 97

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Environment	Austria	- Participation in the 1st meeting of the SECI Project Group "Danube Recovery Programme", 2-4 Dec. 97
	Belgium	- Consultations, fund raising with the European Union, 25 Nov. 97 - To have consultations with NATO officials on transboundary environmental issues and consultations with European Union and NGOs officials on environmental friendly agriculture practices, 12 Jan. 98
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	- To consult with government authorities, enterprises, NGOs and aid agencies on environmental problem identification, project formulation and development, 8-12 July 97
	Croatia	- To consult with government authorities, enterprises, NGOs and aid agencies on environmental problem identification, project formulation and development, 8-12 July 97 - To assist in the preparation of the project "Integrated and sustainable water protection and prevention of pollution in agricultural, practice" under ECE Water Convention, 16-19 Dec. 97
	Estonia	- Consultation with central government, local authorities on chemical waste project, 28-29 Oct. 97; Contribution to Narva Forum, 30 Oct. - 1 Nov. 97 - Programme preparation for the ECE Conference on the Protection of Internaitonal Lakes, 27-28 Nov. 97
	Finland	- Participation in the 1st meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, 2-4 July 97
	France	- To participate in a conference on the Environment in Russian Fed., organised by the Council of Europe, 10 Dec. 97

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Environment (continued)	Georgia	- Cooperation in the Training Workshop on the Significance and Implementation of ECE conventions in Transcaucasian countries, 16-22 Nov. 97
	Germany	- Visit to the German Agency for Technical Cooperation to describe advisory activities , search for cooperation and sponsoring, 23-25 July 97 - Consultations with German environmental authorities, 19-20 Sept. 97
	Kyrgyzstan	- Contribution to the meeting of NEAP coordinators in Bishkek. Consultation with Kyrgyzstan authorities on needs and projects, 11-21 Apr. 97
	Lithuania	- Environmental Performance Review of Lithuania, 1-8 Oct. 97
	Moldova	- Environmental Performance Review of Moldova, 12-21 May 97
	Netherlands	- Consultations, fund raising and cooperation with the Dutch Authorities, 25-27 Nov. 97
	Poland	- Contribution to the International Conference on Management of Transboundary Waters in Europe, 21-24 Sept. 97
	Russian Federation	- Contribution to the seminar of the Moscow City Government on improving industrial safety in Moscow enterprises, 7-10 Dec. 97
	Sweden	- Contribution to the Council of Europe Conference on nuclear safety and local/regional democracies, 24-26 June 97

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Environment (continued)	Ukraine	- Participation in Steering Committee of Programme to Promote Sustainable Development and discussion on priorities of environmental cooperation, 21-23 May 97 - Contribution to the Stockpiled Obsolete Pesticides Workshop, Kiev, 11-13 June 97 - To advise concerning a bilateral chemical industrial safety project in the Azot factory (Rovno, Ukraine); to discuss proposals of projects with Ukrainian authorities in Kiev, 4-10 Aug. 97
	United Kingdom	- Consultations with Centre for Petroleum, Mineral Law and Policy, University of Dundee, Scotland; Preparation of project on legal advisory service under ECE Water Conventions, University of Dundee, Scotland; Lecture on ECE Environmental Conventions, University of Dundee, Scotland, 6-8 Feb. 98
	United States	- Lecturing at the World Bank, 2-6 Nov. 97; Fund raising with US AID, US EPA, UNDP, GEF, 6-9 Nov. 97
Statistics	France	- To participate in the Joint OECD / ECE / EUROSTAT meeting on national accounts and the organizing committee for the 1998 meeting of the Canberra Group on capital stock statistics, 3-7 June 97
	Luxembourg	- To participate in the meeting of the Working Group on EU Statistical Cooperation with CECs, NIS and Mongolia, 14 May and meeting of the Steering Committee on EU Statistical Cooperation with CECs, 15-16 May 1997 (14-16 May)
	Russian Fedederation	- Consultations with officials of GOSKOMSTAT, Moscow, to provide technical assistance for the improvement of capital stock statistics in Russia, 6-10 Oct. 97
	Ukraine	- To participate in the Meeting of the Steering Committee on the coordination of Technical Assistance in Statistics to the countries of the FSU, 20-21 May 1997 (19-22 May)
	United States	- To participate in the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts, UN Headquarters, New York, 3-6 May 1997

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Trade	Austria	- Visit to UNIDO to discuss investment promotion, 18 June 97
	Belgium	- SECI Coordination meeting with the World Bank and European Commission, 22 Jan. 98 - To attend the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Working Party on Trade and Investment in an Enlarging Europe, 5 - 6 Feb. 98
	Bulgaria	- To participate in 2nd meeting of the Project Group on Transport under SECI Project No. 4, 27-29 Jan. 98
	Croatia	- Meeting of BOT Group with Government of Croatia, 17-18 Nov 97
	Czech Republic	- Presentation and attendance at the 5th OSCE Economic Forum, 11-13 June 97
	France	- To attend conference "Review of Romanian Privatization", organized by OECD and to act as Rapporteur and Presenter of keynote speech, 16-17 Oct. 97 - To participate in US Department of Defence / AFNOR meeting on assessing national standards, Oct. 97
	Germany	- BOT Meeting, 11 July 97
	Greece	- SECI Project Group Meeting, 1-3 Mar. 97 - SECI Project Group Meeting, 15-16 May 97 - SECI Business Advisory Council Meeting, 26 June 97 - SECI Project Meeting, 1-3 July 97 - SECI Border Crossing Project Meeting, 8-9 Oct. 97 - Presentation of SECI and Border Crossing Facilitation Project to 2nd Balkan Congress of Freight Forwarders, 27-29 Nov 97

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Trade (continued)	Hungary	- Speaker at National Hungarian EDI Conference; Meetings with Ministry of Industry and Trade, SECI; and Meeting with PHARE Multicountry Trade Development, 18-20 June 97 - PHARE Programme Conference on Trade Policy and Investment, 19-20 June 97
	Kazakhstan	- Presentation and attendance at the OSCE meeting, 22-24 Oct. 97
	Latvia	- OECD meeting, to make a presentation, 24-26 Nov 97
	Poland	- Participation in 5th Polish National EDI Conference, including a special meeting with representatives of government to relaunch national trade facilitation committee, 3-6 June 97
	Russian Federation	- Conducting negotiations on issues of development of cooperation between the Republic of Tatarstan and UN/ECE, 8-9 July 97
	Switzerland	- Meeting with Ambassador Schifter, FIATA and Swiss Customs to discuss Phase II of SECI Border Crossing Project, 8 Dec 97
	Thailand	- Conference on Development Project Financing, 23-28 June 97
	Turkey	- Participation in SECI Business Advisory Council Meeting, 11-13 Dec 97
	Ukraine	- To hold consultations at Ministry of Economy, Ministry of External Economic Relations and the National Agency for Reconstruction and Development on activities of ECE which could be of interest to Ukraine, 25-28 Aug. 97 - To attend and speak at UN/ECE BSEC Workshop on SMEs and Foreign Trade, 13-14 Nov 97
	United Kingdom	- To attend the REAG meeting, 20-21 Oct. 97 - To finalize the programme of the WP. 5 meeting and make a presentation to BSA, Industry Association Meeting and likely sponsors for WP.5 Forum in May 98; Meeting with UK government on project in Estonia; 16-20 Jan. 98
	United States	- Meetings to discuss SECI project financing with UNDP, World Bank, US Customs and US State Department, 28-30 May 97

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Transport	Austria	- To attend a meeting with the European Commission TINA office, 4 Nov. 97 - To participate in the TER Steering Committee, 4-5 Dec. 97
	Belarus	- To participate in the International Conference on the Development of the Communication System, 28-31 Oct. 97
	Belgium	- To attend the G 24 Transport Working Group, 2-3 Dec. 97
	Bulgaria	- Preparation of SECI Meeting, 3-5 May 97 - To participate in SECI Meeting on transport infrastructure, 27 May 97 - To attend the Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Project Group on Transport (SECI), 27-29 Jan. 98
	Hungary	- To assist in the TER Working Party on Infrastructure and Development (WP1), 11-13 June 97 - To work in the TER Project Central Office, 15-18 Sept. 97 - Upon the request of the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Water Management to give suggestions on the operation of the Hungarian Transport Training Centre, 4 Nov. 97
	Russian Federation	- At the invitation of OECD, to participate in the Conference "Regional Approach to Industrial Restructuring in the Tomsk Oblast", 3-6 June 97 - Request of the Ministry of Transport to give assistance in the development of documents for the International Euro-Asian Conference on Transport, 23-24 Dec. 97
	Slovakia	- To participate in the Round Table on TEM Financing, 12-14 Nov. 97
	Thailand	- At the request of ESCAP, to participate in a policy level expert group meeting, 16-21 June 97
	Turkey	- To assist in the BSEC Business Conference, 28-30 Apr. 97; Discussions with the BSEC Secretariat, 1 May 97
	Turkmenistan	- To participate int he Negotiating Conference on a Transit Transport Framework Agreement between the Central Asian Countries and their neighbours, 18-20 Nov. 97
	Ukraine	- To participate in the International Black Sea Transport Conference, 15 May 97

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Coord. Unit for Oper.Act.	Belarus	- Participation in the International Conference "Six years of the Commonwealth of Independent States: problems and perspectives", Minsk, 2-4 March 1998
	France	- Visit to the Council of Europe and consultations on cooperation and joint actions by ECE and the Council of Europe, 17-18 Dec. 97
	Hungary	- Participate and facilitate the discussion at the Conference on Financing SMEs in central and Eastern Europe, 5-8 June 1997 - Participate in the 18th Academy on Organization Science on European Methods of Cross-border Cooperation, 30 June - 2 July 1997 - Microcredit Training Course, 10-14 Sept. 1997
	Kazakhstan	- To participate in Workshop on Private Sector Development and Privatization in the Industrial Sector in Selected Central Asian Economies in Transition, 12-17 May 97 - Consultations with the President and the Government of Kazakstan on SPECA programme, 2-4 Oct. 97 - Participation in the Senior Officials meeting of Central Asian countries on SPECA issues, 25 - 27 February 1998
	Kyrgyzstan	- Consultations with the President and the Government of Kyrgyzstan on SPECA issues, 22-23 Dec. 97
	Romania	- To participate in the 1st SECI Project Group Meeting on Financial Policies for Strengthening SMEs, 25 Apr. 97 - Participation in Business Advisory Council Meeting to SECI on SMEs, 9-pt. 1997 - 2nd SECI Project Group Meeting on Financial Policies to Promote SMEs through microcredit and credit guarantee schemes, 2-3 Oct. 1997

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Coord. Unit for Oper.Act. (continued)	Russian Federation	- Preparation of the Conference coordination with OECD, 1-2 June 97 - Participation in conference "Regional Approach to Industrial Restructuration in Tomsk Oblast" organized by OECD, 3-5 June 97 - Organization and participation in the CIS Summit Conference, 18 - 20 June 97 - Consulting the authorities of the Republic of Tatarstan, Russian Federation, on the issues of cooperation with UN/ECE, 8-9 July 97 - Consultations at the CIS Inter-State Economic Committee and with the Government officials of the Russian Federation, 1-8 Sept. 97 - Participation in the Saint-Petersburg Economic Forum, Saint-Petersburg, Russian Federation, 18-20 June 1997
	Slovenia	- To participate in the 9th Plenary Meeting of the Working Group on SMEs of the Central European Initiative, 5-7 May 97
	Tajikistan	- Consultations with the President and the Government of Tajikistan on SPECA issues, 9-10 February 1998
	Turkey	- Participation in Business Advisory Council Meeting, 11-13 Dec. 97

Table 1. Activities of regional advisers

Division	Countries visited	Purpose
Coord. Unit for Oper.Act. (continued)	Turkmenistan	- Consultations with the President and the Government of Turkmenistan on SPECA issues, 20-22 Jan. 98
	Ukraine	- Consultations at Ministry of Economy, Ministry of External Economic Relations and the National Agency for Reconstruction and Development on activities of ECE which could be of interest to Ukraine, 25-28 Aug. 97 - Participation in BSEC Workshop on "SMEs - Their Role in Foreign Trade", 12-11 Nov. 97
	Uzbekistan	Consultations with the Government of Uzbekistan on SPECA issues, 5-6 Oct. 97

Table 2. Workshops, seminars, training courses and study tours

Division	Title
Economic analysis	Workshops 1. Workshop on using the census samples collection, Geneva, 1-4.10.97
Energy	Workshops 1. Workshop on the role of enhancement of utilization of primary and secondary hydro potential in the context of environmental protection, Slovakia, 13-15.05.97 2. Workshop on Applied Solar Energy, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 9-14.6.97 3. Workshop on the power engineering and lighting engineering ENERGETIRA96, Slovenia, 14-16.05.97 4. Workshop on energy saving equipment and technologies, Kazakhstan, 14-17.05.97 5. Workshop on natural gas rate making in the ECE region and its implications for gas price transition in economies in transition, Holland, 19-22.05.97 6. Workshop on repair of urban gas distribution pipelines, France, 20-21.05.97 7. Workshop on geodynamic zoning, St. Petersburg, 24-26.06.97 8. Project Development workshop Budapest, Hungary 22-26.9.97 9. Workshop on rehabilitation of gas transmission lines, Ukraine, 24-27.09.97 10. Workshop on global mining taxation, St. Petersburg, 9-10.10.97 Training courses 1. Training course on financial engineering, St. Petersburg, Russia, 14-18.4.97 2. Training course on business planning and financial engineering, St. Petersburg, 16-18.07.97 3. Training course on business planning and financial engineering, Nijhny Novgorod, Russia, 16-19.02.98
Environment	Workshops/seminars 1. Workshop on monitoring data analysis and validation and reporting, Czech Republic, 7-30.04.97 2. Workshop on strategies for monitoring air pollution, Sweden, 2-4.06.97 3. Eighth Conference on urban and regional research, Spain, 5-9.06.97 4. Seminar on integrated assessment modelling for a multi-pollutant / multi-effect protocol, Austria, 4-5.09.97 5. Subregional workshop on environmental impact assessment in countries in transition, Moldova, 22-24.9.97 6. Workshop on management of transboundary waters in Europe, Poland, 22-25.09.97

Table 2. Workshops, seminars, training courses and study tours

Division	Title
Environment (continued)	Workshops (continued) 7. Workshop on protection against groundwater depletion in large catchment areas, Hungary, 7-9.10.97 8. UN-ECE/OECD Workshop on the role of economic instruments in integrating environmental policy with sectoral policies, Czech Republic, 8-10.10.1997 9. Second meeting of officials on land administration, Poland, 27.10.97 10. Workshop on the Polish cadastre, 27-28.10.1997 11. Workshop on critical limits and effects based approaches for heavy metals and persistent organic pollutants, Germany, 3-7.11.97 12. Workshop on encouraging local initiatives towards sustainable consumption patterns, Austria, 2-4.2.98 Training courses 1. Training course on the implementation of ECE environmental conventions related to water, environmental impact assessment and industrial accidents, Georgia, 17-21.11.97
Statistics	Workshops 1. Census Donor meeting to assist the newly independent States of the former USSR and Yugoslavia in contacting potential donors for the 2000 census round, Geneva, 26.9.97 2. ECE/UNDP Workshop on human development and social trends reporting, Bratislava, 14-19.11.97 3. ECE/UNFPA Census Training Project - Workshop for CIS on the results & Lessons to be learned from the Pilot Censuses during 1997, Moscow, 2-6.12.97 4. ECE/UNDP Workshop on human development and social trends reporting, Bled, Slovenia, 11-16.12.97 5. ECE/UNDP Workshop on human development & social trends reporting, Valetta, Malta, 19-23.1.98 *Planned:* 6. ECE/UNDP Workshop on human development and social trends reporting, Kiev, 4-7.3.98 7. ECE/UNDP Workshop on household budgets / poverty surveys, Minsk, 12-17.3.98 8. ECE/UNFPA Census Training Project - second Workshop on the Results of Pilot Censuses in Countries of the CIS: Problems of Content and Data Processing, Moscow, 31.3-4.4.98

Table 2. Workshops, seminars, training courses and study tours

Division	Title
Statistics (continued)	Training courses 1. ECE/OECD special (training) meeting of national accounts experts from CIS countries, Geneva, 20-24.10.97 2. Training course on census basic concept and definition, Moscow, 28.10-2.11.97 3. Special training session on consumer price indices for transition countries, Geneva, 27.11.97 4. Training course on the use of GIS in population census, Belarus, 16-21.02.98 *Planned:* 5. Training course on census data processing, Croatia, 22-28.3.98 Study tours 1. A study tour of the CIS countries to observe the pilot census in Belarus, 11. 97
Trade	Workshops/seminars 1. Forum on the prospects for promoting foreign direct investments in the transition economies, Geneva, 29-30.09.97 2. Workshop on new trends in thinnings, Slovakia, 8-12.09.97 3. Seminar on chemical research and the changing role of R&D institutions, Poland, 7-11.10.97 4. Workshop on trade finance in transition economies: practical ways to support exports and imports, Geneva, 27-28.11.97 5. Workshop on experience of the Czech Republic on issues of transition, Geneva, 10.12.97 *Planned:* 6. Workshop on economic aspects of clean technologies, energy and water management in the steel industry, Austria, 22-24.04.98 7. Seminar on forestry training for groups that are hard to reach, France, 20-24.4.1998 Training courses 1. Workshop/training course on marketing of sawnwood, Arkhangelsk, Russia, 24-28.11.97 Study tours 1. Study tour on forest and forest industries sector, Baltic countries, 4-10.05.97 2. Study Tour of the Iron and Steel Industry of the Republic of Korea, 9-15 November 1997

Table 2. Workshops, seminars, training courses and study tours

Division	Title
Transport	Workshops 1. Workshop on urban transport and environmental statistics, Washington, 12-15.05.97 2. Workshop on the improvement of rail safety in connection with the increasing of speed, Paris, 22-24.09.97 3. TER Round Table on latest development in the railway sector, Eger (Hungary), 22-24.09.97 4. Round Table on actual issues in transport on the TEM countries' way to Europe, Budapest, 23-25.04.97 5. Training course on programme suite for transportation project management, Warsaw, 16-20.06.97 6. Training course on software for decision-making process with respect to optimum timing of loans, Budapest, 20-22.10.97 7. Round Table on TEM financing, Modra (Slovakia), 12-14.11.97
Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities	Workshops 1. International conference on Higher education, research and industry in european economies in transition, Latvia, 4-7.10.97 2. Workshop on SMEs - their role in foreign trade, Ukraine, 12-15.11.97 *Planned:* 3. Workshop on SMEs and Entrepreneurship, Romania, 5-10.5.98 4. Workshop on Best Practice in Financing SMEs, Geneva, 14-15.5.98 5. Workshop on Financing Mechanism for Renewable Energy Sources in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, 10.98 Training courses 1. Microcredit Training course, Hungary, 11-13.09.97 *Planned:* 2. Training course on the role of government in creating public institutions whose task is enterprise creation and SME support, Italy, 4.98

Table 3. Operational activities for subregional groupings/special inititatives/programmes

Subregional groupings/ special initiatives/ programmes	Activities
Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)	- Joint organization of Workshop on "SMEs - Their Role in Foreign Trade", Ukraine, Nov.97 - Joint studies agreed to be carried out on: a) "Energy Situation in the BSEC Region" and b) "Development of Energy Policies in the BSEC Region, including the Related Priorities and Targets"; to be followed by a joint symposium on the latter subject - ECE secretariat will also support a feasibility study on the BSEC interconnected power system. - Review of the development of energy efficiency demonstration zones in BSEC countries and financial mechanisms for the realization of energy efficiency projects in these zones was proposed for joint implementation - The SECI projects on border crossing and electricity grids are to be extended to interested BSEC countries
Central European Initiative (CEI)	- Participation in meetings organized by the CEI Working Group on SMEs (Meeting of the Ministers responsible for SME development, Austria, Apr. 97; and 9th plenary meeting of the Working Group, Slovenia, May 97) - ECE/CEI consultative meeting held in Geneva in July 1997 - Assistance to the CEI Working Group on SMEs, in preparation of work programmes and projects for future cooperation - Two project proposals in the field of sustainable energy development, prepared and sent to the CEI secretariat for consideration, namely: energy efficiency and environmental security in central European countries; and analysis of the energy situation in and energy security of the region.
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	- Priority areas of cooperation discussed and agreed on: economic analysis and statistics, protection of environment, energy, transport, trade and entrepreneurship development - Organization of the International Conference on Sustainable Development of Countries in Transition, Minsk, April 97, in cooperation with the CIS Interstate Ecological Council and Interstate Economic Committee - Cooperation with the CIS Interstate Statistical Committee

Table 3. Operational activities for subregional groupings/special inititatives/programmes

Subregional groupings/ special initiatives/ programmes	Activities
Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)	- Preparation of project proposals for the first meeting of the SECI Agenda Committee, Jan.97. Six projects were selected: a) Trade facilitation - actions to overcome border crossing difficulties (lead country - Greece) b) Transport infrastructure - identification of bottlenecks along main international corridors in the SECI region and short-term measures to remove them (lead country - Bulgaria) c) Financial policies to promote SMEs through microcredit and credit guarantee schemes (lead country - Romania) d) Energy efficiency demonstration zones network in southeast Europe (lead country - Hungary) e) Interconnection of natural gas networks, diversification of gas supply and improvement of security of supply in southeast Europe (lead country - Bosnia and Herzegovina) f) Danube recovery programme For each project selected, several meetings have been held. The ECE secretariat contributed in the organization of these meetings and prepared background documents and resulting reports. At the last Agenda Committee Meeting in January 1998, one additional project was decided on: g) Interconnection of electricity grids (lead country - The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) In addition, a project proposal on cooperation among stock exchanges of the Region has been prepared and circulated to members of the Agenda Committee. Efforts have been made to secure financial support for the projects and the involvement of the business community in their implementation.

Table 3. Operational activities for subregional groupings/special inititatives/programmes

Subregional groupings/ special initiatives/ programmes	Activities
Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)	- In cooperation with ESCAP, 32 project ideas have been discussed with the potential participating countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Areas expected to be covered by the project ideas: development issues and policies, transport, energy, trade policy and trade promotion, environment, natural resources development and management, industrial development and investment promotion, and technology. - It has been agreed that that the Programme would initially be composed of five projects which are of common interest to all five countries and each of these countries would assume the lead country responsibility for one project. A Regional Advisory Committee to review the progress of the programme and give appropriate directions as well as working groups for each of the five projects would be established. The Programme is expected to be launched officially at a Summit meeting of Heads of State to be convened by the President of Kazakhstan in early 1998. - The Executive Secretary of ECE visited Heads of State of the five Central Asian Republics.

ANNEX I

Operational Activities by Sector - Descriptive information

Trade and investment promotion

1. Operational activities in this field have been focused on the dissemination of best practices in investment promotion techniques, promotion of private investment in infrastructure (road, rail, telecommunications, power generating networks, water systems, etc.) and stimulation of investment in real estate. In implementing these activities, the following trends have been observed: a growing demand from ECE economies in transition for high quality policy advice and a strong interest in the support of the private sector and international organizations.

2. An international forum on prospects for promoting foreign direct investment in the transition economies was one of the major events organized in 1997 by the secretariat (Geneva, September 1997) in cooperation with the Foreign Investment Advisory Service (FIAS) of the World Bank. For the first time a significant number of delegates representing city and regional authorities also took part, demonstrating the importance of regional efforts to promote foreign investment. On the basis of experiences described, the Forum provided a template of standards to assist city and regional agencies in developing investment promotion strategies and techniques, to promote themselves within their own public administrations and to secure more funding for their activities from their own Governments.

3. The UN/ECE "Build, Operate and Transfer" (BOT) Expert Group established in January 1996 has continued to develop best practices in attracting private finance for public infrastructure in each of the relevant sectors. The guidelines on "Public-Private Partnerships: A New Concept for Infrastructure Development" were completed in November 1997. To address the issue of stimulation of investment in real estate, a Real Estate Advisory Group (REAG) was established, with a task force to travel to a country on request in order to identify the bottlenecks and obstacles in the legal, financial and institutional areas for the good functioning of property markets.

Trade facilitation and development

4. Trade facilitation requires political will and technical knowledge. The newly created CEFACT is working on an International Trade Transaction (ITT) model which will help to obtain, at the ministerial level, the understanding and support which are essential to address practical problems at operational levels. National models for Hungary, Poland and the Russian Federation have been developed and the secretariat is currently working with Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Albania.

5. In the area of trade facilitation, ECE assistance has involved familiarization with, and application of, a variety of trade facilitation

techniques, standards and recommendations now maintained by CEFACT. It was extended to Albania, Kazakhstan and Ukraine in 1997. The World Wide Web has been increasingly used for the dissemination and exchange of information. ECE provided backstopping to the SECI Border Crossing Facilitation Project, in particular in the simplification and harmonization of procedures and documentation, and in the promotion of National Trade Facilitation Committees (PRO Committees).

6. During the year, contributions were received for the development of a technical assistance programme on UN/EDIFACT for the countries of eastern Europe. It is expected that this programme will be implemented during 1998.

7. Assistance to foreign trade development focused on risk assessment and management, cooperation of exporters with banks and insurers, and the organization of export finance in a private company. These issues were discussed at a Workshop on "Trade Finance in Transition Economies: Practical Ways to Support Exports and Imports", held in Geneva in November 1997.

Energy efficiency and energy supply

8. In the energy sector, assistance was provided on economic and technical analysis, on the elaboration of policies and institutions with particular emphasis on energy efficiency and clean technology.

9. The energy efficiency and conservation problems were addressed through the creation of energy efficiency demonstration zones and the development of financial mechanisms for attracting foreign investors to realise energy efficiency projects. Since April 1996, the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project has worked on standards, business planning, development of investment project development and new financing mechanisms. It has cooperated with the World Bank Project Implementation Units (PIU) and Headquarters staff on business plans, with the support of Norway, for investments in demonstration zones in eight Russian cities. A Guide to Investors in Energy Efficiency Projects in the Russian Federation, produced with the support of the United States and Norway, was published. This approach will be widely disseminated to other economies in transition through the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project and brought to the attention of investors through the World Bank Internet Site.

10. For SECI, a network of energy efficiency experts was established, an electronic communication facility was developed on the World Wide Web, and a plan for how projects can be implemented was put in place.

11. The technical cooperation programme "Promotion and Development of a Market-Based Gas Industry in Economies in Transition - Gas Centre" was set up in 1994 in response to the needs of transition countries for an efficient transfer of market-based natural gas policy and knowledge. Currently, the Centre is financially supported by 25 institutions from 19 countries, mainly the major oil and gas companies operating in western and eastern Europe and North America. It provides assistance to Governments and gas industries in transition economies to facilitate

the implementation of market-based policies, practices and principles. Since its creation, the Gas Centre has organized nine seminars or conferences on the above issues attended by over 900 participants from more than 30 member countries.

12. Two other priorities have been defined: the development of a training manual for gas rate-making and a database on key aspects of a market-based gas industry. The manual is designed to be an instrument used by trainers in individual transition countries to transfer knowledge on pricing issues and rate-making as quickly and as broadly as possible. The first basic training manual was published in November 1997. The database includes key aspects of a market-based gas industry and will cover all major gas markets in the ECE region. A CD-Rom was produced in December 1997.

13. With the help of a Task Force established by the Gas Centre, a crude assessment of natural gas demand in the SECI participating countries and a more detailed assessment of demand and supply possibilities for Bosnia and Herzegovina have been completed; six projects of new pipeline interconnections, out of 19 proposed, have been identified.

Transport development

14. Assistance in the transport sector focused on advice on the implementation of ECE conventions and agreements. In addition two workshops were held to support countries in transition. The first, held in Washington in May 1997, was to discuss ways to strengthen statistics on urban and regional passenger transport and its environmental impact in order to facilitate decision-making in transport policy, planning and investment. The second took place in Paris in September 1997 to address institutional aspects related to rail safety and to show the practical experience gained by railway companies in determining the technical safety requirements while increasing speed.

15. The Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) projects remain the main mechanism for providing assistance to the countries of central and eastern Europe. Workshops, round tables and training courses, with particular emphasis on investment efficiency, assessment and evaluation of cost and benefits, optimal timing for investments, sensitivity and risk analysis, and benefits outside the transport sector, have been organized in relation to the TER project. Environmental impact assessment, road funds, data banks, international finance institutions, and concessions for roads have been the subjects of the workshops, seminars and round tables related to the TEM project. In the context of the SECI project on transport infrastructure, ECE assisted in the identification of a large number of small scale infrastructure projects along the Pan European Transport Corridor to be submitted to international financial institutions for possible financing.

Environmental management

16. The operational activities in this area are concentrated mainly on the implementation of the different conventions and the environmental performance review programme elaborated and implemented under the guidance of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy.

17. Under the ECE Water Convention several field projects on monitoring transboundary waters were initiated, and assistance was provided to Azerbaijan, Belarus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation. Funding was received from PHARE, TACIS and/or national contributions. Three major events have taken place since April 1997: a Workshop on Information for Decision-Making (Poland, May 1997); an International Conference on Management of Transboundary Waters in Europe (Poland, September 1997); and an International Workshop on Ground Water Depletion in Basin Regions: Problems arising between the Rivers Danube and Tisza (Hungary, October 1997). A workshop will be organized on risk assessment in Slovakia in March 1998.

18. A Parliamentarian Conference on Environmental and Industrial Safety Legislation organized by the Hungarian National Assembly and the ECE Regional Coordinating Centre for the Prevention of Industrial Accidents was held in Budapest in October 1997. The Conference provided a platform for the exchange of experience and information among parliamentarians, especially those from countries in transition, on issues related to environmental and industrial safety legislation.

19. The assessment of the national environmental policies and management of Slovenia from a pan-European perspective (Environmental Performance Review - EPR) was completed in May 1997 and published as No.2 in the ECE's EPR Series. The review of Moldova is nearing completion and reviews of Latvia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine have been started. ECE participated in the preparatory mission of the EPR to be conducted by the OECD for the Russian Federation and will contribute to the review itself.

20. A joint ECE/OECD workshop held in the Czech Republic in October 1997 resulted in a set of draft recommendations to Governments of ECE countries in transition on the application of economic instruments for better integrating environmental policy with sectoral policies.

Land administration and housing sector

21. In the area of Land Administration, priority is given to the improvement of cadastre and land registration which are essential to the development of private investments. Land Administration Guidelines were published and action taken to stimulate their implementation. An *ad hoc* meeting on the financing of Land Administration projects was held in March 1997 in cooperation with the World Bank.

22. In the development of the housing sector, ECE operational activities focus on the elaboration of country profiles and case studies on the implementation, at the local level, of housing modernization and renewal policies. Country profiles of the housing sector have been prepared by Task Forces in Bulgaria and Poland and

preparations have started for a study on Slovakia. A case study on modernization has been prepared for Bratislava and other case studies are planned for Budapest and Ljubljana.

Entrepreneurship and SME development

23. The aim of the programme for the development of SMEs is to assist countries to formulate national SME policy, design promotion programmes, develop the relevant infrastructure and help new entrepreneurs. The programme is focused on collecting and disseminating statistics and information on legislation and promotional measures; developing information networks; preparing case studies and information materials on SME development issues; formulating project proposals; providing advisory services; and training. Support was given to the SECI Project Group on Financial Policies to Strengthen SMEs.

24. To better disseminate experiences and recommendations to governments, local authorities and enterprises, a database on SME Development has been put on the ECE Web site. It contains more than 30 information sheets including definition, policy guidance, case studies, legislation, finance, etc., and more than 15 direct links to institutions dealing with SMEs. An Information Network among national SME policy focal points and institutions promoting SMEs was developed, put on the ECE Web site and lately enlarged by Greece and Turkey. An ECE document highlighting recent changes in SME legislation and promotion measures is being prepared.

Statistics

25. Operational activities in this field have complemented the regular programme of the Conference of European Statisticians and are closely integrated with the activities of other statistical agencies in the region. Their main thrust is aimed at improving the capability of national statistical offices (NSO) to provide social and demographic statistics through population censuses and from other sources.

26. Two projects on the preparation of case studies on improving the methods of measuring the capital stocks in transition economies have been started in the Russian Federation and Bulgaria. They are considered as pilot studies, the results of which would eventually be of benefit to other economies in transition.

27. In the area of population statistics, ECE assistance is carried out with strong support from UNFPA. It focuses on enhancing national capabilities in demographic data collection and research methodology. In particular ECE is the executing agency for a UNFPA regional project on assistance to countries in transition in Europe with the 2000 round of censuses and the implementing agency for a UNDP regional project on human development and social trends reporting in countries in transition in Europe and CIS. In both projects assistance is mainly provided through workshops and study tours which simultaneously benefit several countries. A Census Donor meeting (Geneva, September 1997) assisted the newly independent States of the former USSR and Yugoslavia in contacting potential donors

for the 2000 census round. A study tour of the CIS countries to observe the pilot census in Belarus was organized in November 1997. A workshop for countries of the former USSR to discuss the implications for census operations of the six pilot censuses in the CIS during 1997 as well as census funding was held in Moscow in December 1997. Two workshops were held under the above-mentioned UNDP project on statistics required for human development and social trends; one for the countries of Central Asia and Azerbaijan (Slovakia, November 1997), and the other for the countries of central Europe and the Baltics (Slovenia, December 1997). Individual in-country training has been given only to a small number of countries, although plans exist to expand it to benefit countries with special needs.

Research and development

28. The Plan of Action foresees that, in areas of work which have been phased out in the reform process, the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities could organise, at the request of governments, *ad hoc* workshops or studies. It is in this context that an international Conference on Higher Education, Research and Industry in European Economies in Transition was organized in Latvia in October 1997 and addressed the following issues: national concepts of higher education and R and D activities; problems of promoting science and technology, instruments for supporting innovation; and international cooperation and its role in encouraging innovation. The extensive conclusions and recommendations adopted at the Conference underlined the complexity of the issue which requires further analysis and discussions in international fora.